

Amendment to the Eightmile Timber Sale EA

This amendment documents potential changes to environmental impacts associated with a proposal to increase the area treated in the original Eightmile Timber Sale EA.

Project Name: County Line TS

Implementation Date: December, 2014 -July, 2016

Location: E2, NW4 Sec 36 T11N R19W

I.Type and Purpose of Action

The DNRC Hamilton Unit is proposing to expand (by approximately 140 acres) the area of treatment described in the Eightmile Timber Sale Environmental Assessment (New treatment area shown on the attached map). This proposal is estimated to result in the harvest of an additional .5 mmbf of sawlog volume. The original Eightmile Timber Sale environmental analysis was approved in July of 2010. A Timber Sale Contract (S01658) was awarded in November 2010 and harvesting occurred in 2011 & 2012. This timber sale contract is now closed. The treatment that occurred did an excellent job meeting the project objectives on the area treated (104 acres) but did not address overstocked conditions on adjacent trust land in this section.

Under the proposed action; the DNRC would harvest (thin) overstocked ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir trees and remove trees that have insect damage and poor growth characteristics, (crook, sweep, fork, etc.) on approximately 179 acres (39 acres were not treated in the Eightmile timber sale). Existing roads would be improved and maintained to meet BMP's and no new road construction would occur. The harvest would generate revenue for the trust, reduce insect and disease activity, reduce hazardous fuels buildup, and improve general stand health. A timely removal of beetle hit trees may reduce the potential of stand degradation from Mountain Pine Beetles.

Since the 2010 Eightmile Environmental Assessment is a relatively new document, and the primary difference between it and the new proposal is the amount of area treated, we have decided to amend the existing EA to incorporate potential changes in direct, indirect and cumulative impacts rather than produce a new EA.

The lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the Common Schools; (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11). The Board of Land Commissioners and the DNRC are required by law to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions (Section 77-1-202, MCA). Specific objectives of the project are to capture value of overstocked, deformed, dead and dying trees; reduce future value loss; reduce fuel hazards; and improve overall vigor of the residual stand.

II. Project Development

1. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals Contacted:

The new harvest area was included in the gross project area during the original scoping process. No additional public involvement has occurred

2. Other Governmental Agencies With Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed:

No additional permits are needed

3. Alternatives Considered:

NO ACTION: No additional harvest would occur.

ACTION: DNRC would harvest over stocked Douglas fir and ponderosa pine. It would also harvest trees that have been infected by the mountain pine beetle or have poor growth characteristics (crook, sweep, fork, etc.). A mixed forest overstory on a well –stocked spacing would be retained. Timber would be harvested with ground-based equipment.

III. Impacts on the Physical Environment

4. Geology and Soil Quality, Stability and Moisture:

The geology and soils descriptions, issues analysis and mitigations for direct, indirect and cumulative effects are similar and consistent with the Eightmile EA. All harvest is to remove overstocked, dead and dying trees to improve spacing and reduce competition on moderate to dry sites. Previous harvest effects within the proposed stands are skid trails from past selection harvest over 25 years ago, that have largely recovered. All proposed harvest is ground based or winch-line skidding. The proposed harvest would use existing roads and suitable skid trails. No other concerns are present that were not described and planned for within the environmental assessment and there is low risk of direct-in-direct or cumulative effects from the proposed amended project.

5. Water Quality, Quantity and Distribution:

No harvest is proposed within the Streamside Management Zone of the unnamed tributary of 8 Mile Creek. No new stream crossings are proposed, but culvert and road maintenance would be completed consistent with BMP's to control erosion and reduce sedimentation and Forest Management rules would be applied. A culvert installed on private lands downstream of state section 36 is undersized compared the upstream crossings on state lands, but would not be affected by the proposed actions.

All water quality and quantity issues, analysis and mitigations for direct, indirect and cumulative effects are consistent with the previous 8 Mile environmental assessment and there is low risk of direct-in-direct or cumulative effects from the proposed amended project.

6. Air Quality

The issues analysis and mitigations for direct, indirect and cumulative effects are similar and consistent with the Eightmile EA

7. Vegetation Cover, Quantity and Quality:

No Action: Insect mortality and disease activity would continue to spread and portions of the forest stands would decline in vigor.

Action Alternative: The DNRC would remove ponderosa pine that has been hit by pine beetles and ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir that have poor growth characteristics (crook, sweep, fork, etc.). A timely

removal of beetle hit trees may reduce the potential of stand degradation from Mountain Pine Beetles. Post harvest results would be a stand of dominant ponderosa pine trees spaced at 30-50 feet with intermingled clumps of co-dominant and intermediate ponderosa pine as well as Douglas-fir. The residual stand will be composed of healthy vigorous trees with excellent form and growth characteristics. By opening the stand to a 30-50 foot spacing nutrients and water will be allowed to reach the forest floor and allow for open areas where ponderosa pine seedlings may be planted.

No rare plants have been identified in the project area. There is a concern for increased noxious weeds. To prevent introduction of new weeds, mitigation measures would be implemented that are consistent with the previous Eightmile environmental assessment.

8. Terrestrial, Avian and Aquatic Life and Habitats:

Fish and Aquatic Life: All fish habitat value concerns were addressed within the Eightmile EA. Cutthroat trout is a sensitive species in Woodchuck Creek along the haul route and streams in the amended project area were considered in the original analysis. No harvest operations are planned adjacent to fish bearing streams, and no new stream crossings are proposed. No additional concerns are present and there is low risk of direct-in-direct or cumulative effects from the proposed amended project.

Wildlife: An additional 179 acres of the big game winter range would be altered, but no further changes to the amount of the project area providing thermal cover would be anticipated. All terrestrial wildlife issues, analyses, and mitigations for direct, indirect and cumulative effects are consistent with the previous 8 Mile environmental assessment and minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated from the proposed amendment.

9. Unique, Endangered, Fragile or Limited Environmental Resources:

Cutthroat trout is a sensitive species and this area was considered in the original analysis, EA document. No harvest is proposed within the Streamside Management Zone or Riparian Management Zone of the unnamed tributary of 8 Mile Creek and no measurable effects of the action are expected to impact fish habitat. The issues, mitigations and effects are consistent with the Eightmile EA document and there is low risk of direct-in-direct or cumulative effects from the proposed amended project.

Wildlife: Additional modifications to grizzly bear hiding cover would be anticipated, but no changes to the overall effects analysis would be anticipated with the amendment. Similarly, modifications to additional cover for gray wolves and their prey would be anticipated, but no appreciable change to the overall effects analysis would be anticipated. An additional 126 acres of potential pileated woodpecker habitats would be altered. These modifications would bring the total to 281 acres (79% of habitats in the project area) of pileated woodpecker habitats affected. Overall this increase would likely have a moderate risk of direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to pileated woodpeckers. Likewise, the proposed amendment would add an additional 179 acres to the total of flammulated owl habitats affected, bringing the total of habitats altered in the project area to 340 acres (71%). This would add to the overall habitat quality for flammulated owls in the project and cumulative effects analysis areas. No appreciable changes to the anticipated effects to flammulated owls would be anticipated. All threatened, endangered, and sensitive species issues, analyses, and mitigations for direct, indirect and cumulative effects are consistent with the previous 8 Mile environmental assessment and minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated from the proposed amendment.

IV. Impacts on the Human Population

The issues analysis and mitigations for direct and indirect effects are similar and consistent with the Eightmile EA. The cumulative effects of harvesting an additional 179 acres will further reduce hazardous fuels buildups and will change the aesthetic characteristics as described in the Eightmile EA on the additional acreage treated..

24. Other Appropriate Social and Economic Circumstances:

The proposed project should return approximately \$54,431 to the Common Schools trust. This estimate uses an estimated stumpage rate of \$15.20 per ton. This is multiplied by the expected volume removed, 518 thousand board feet, or 3,581 tons. Additionally, the proposed action would contribute approximately \$11,769 for Forest Improvement.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Paul A. Moore	Date: 1/7/2014
	Title: Hamilton Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED


I select the proposed action alternative (Implementing a timber harvest of additional area). Activities are to be conducted in accordance with the mitigations listed in the original Eightmile Environmental Assessment. The original Eightmile EA project area encompassed the newly proposed County Line timber sale. The only change is the anticipated harvest acres.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Implementing the selected alternative will not cause significant environmental impacts

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

No further analysis is needed

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Robert H. Storer	
	Title: SWLO Trust Lands Program Manager	
Signature:		Date: January 7, 2014

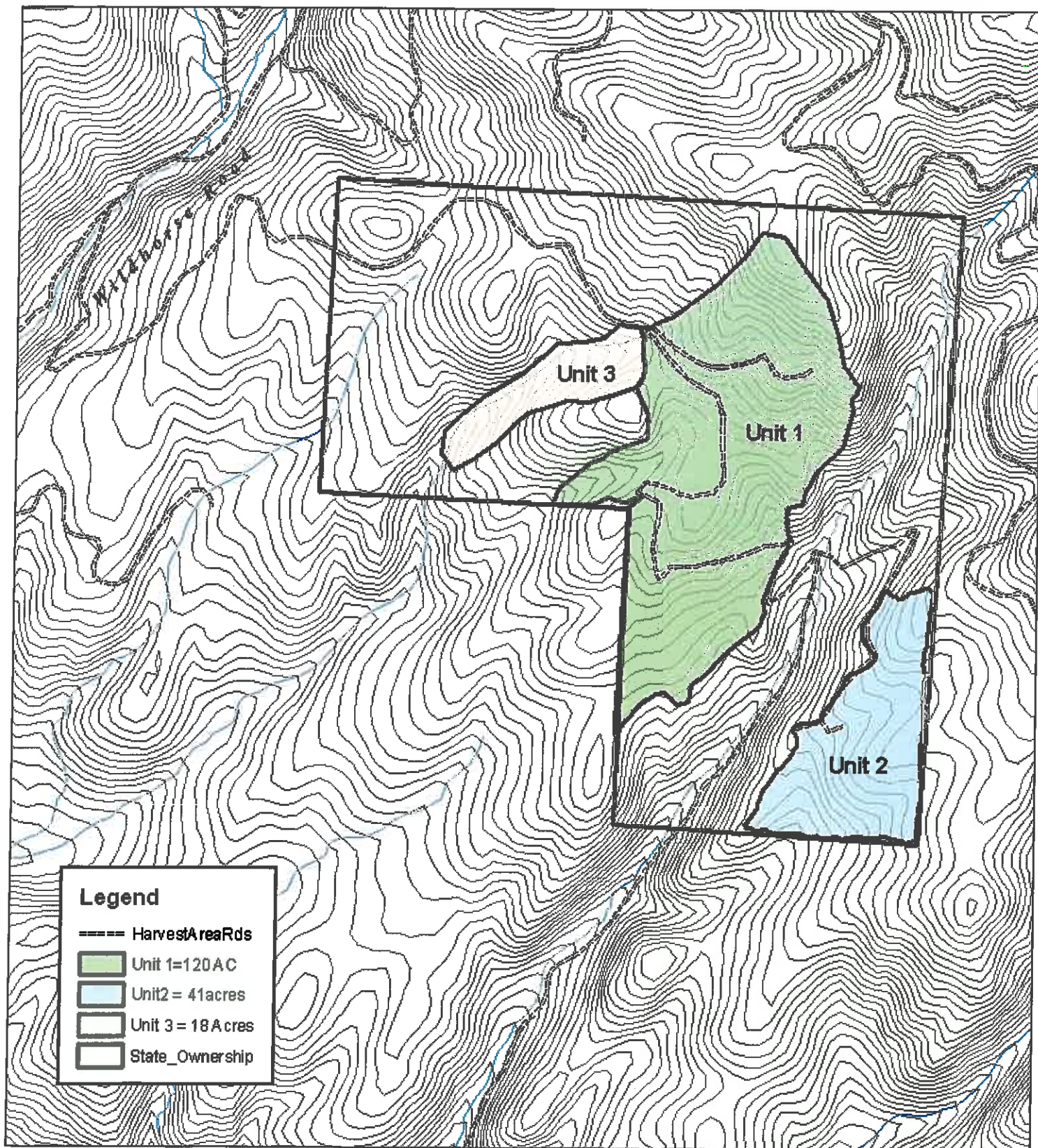


County Line Timber Sale

Section 36 T11N,R19W

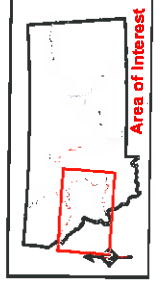
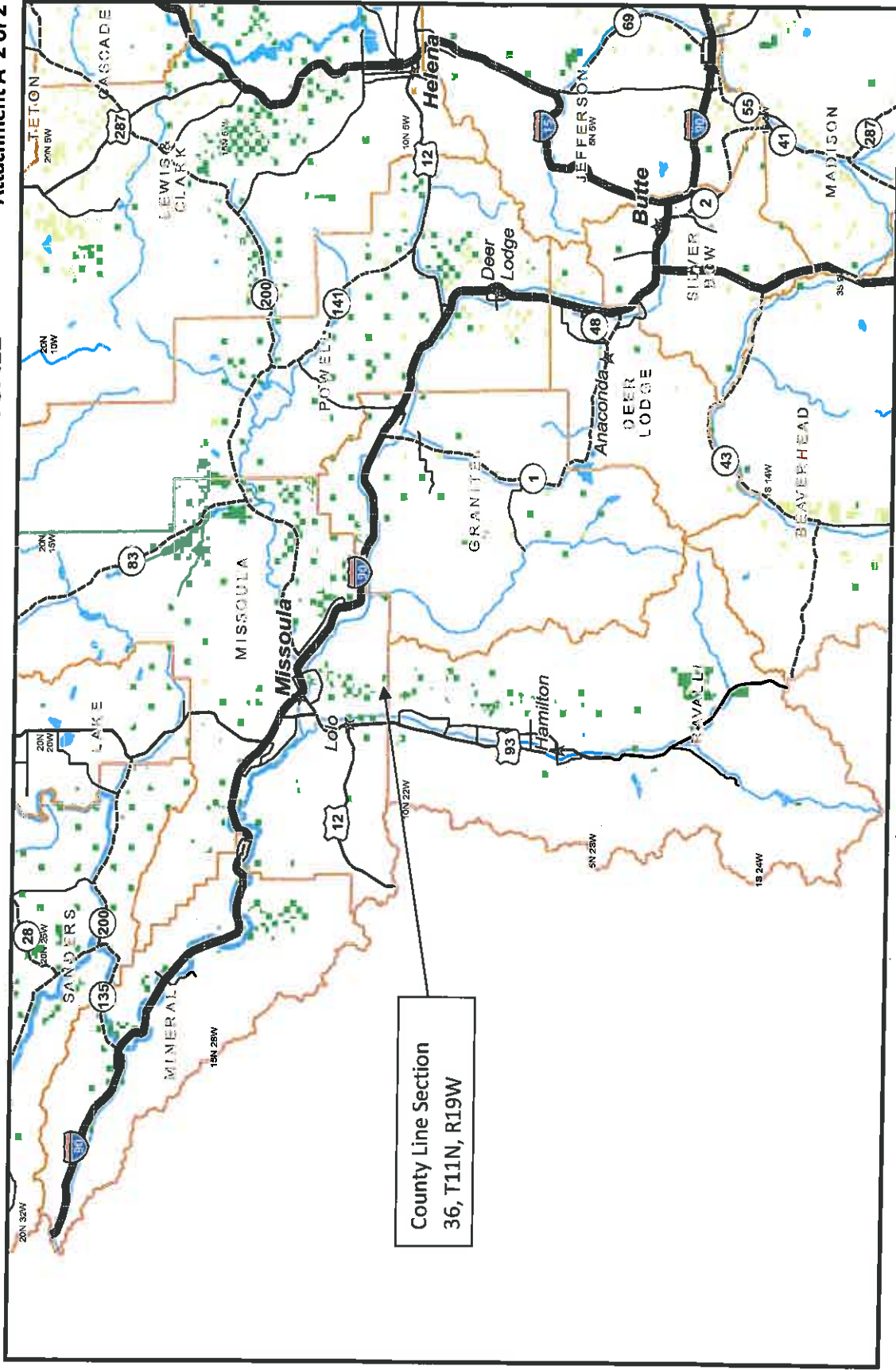
179 Acres

4 7/8 inches = 1 mile



VICINITY MAP COUNTY LINE TIMBER SALE

Attachment A 2 of 2



21 February 2007
Montana DNR
Technical Services Section/dr



Interstate Highway	Rivers	Lakes
U.S. Route	City	DNRC managed for timber
State Highway	County	DNRC other
Secondary Roads		Township/Range